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of spring, summer, and autumn, the first typified by fireflies, the second by butterflies, the third by a dragon fly. Another "nanako" guard bears the date 1829 and is decorated with a dragon finely sculptured in gold bronze. We may refer also to a dragon tsuba by Takechika, of even later date—about 1850—which is an admirable specimen of its kind: here the storm-monster appears in bold relief, emerging from a swirl of waves. We note, finally, one of the newest guards (dated 1861), an excellent example of the fine-spun taste in sword mounting at the time of the breaking down of the Tokugawa shogunate. In this tsuba the background is incised with undulating lines, representing low waves, and it is surcharged with crests of the daimyo Arima. Noteworthy in this specimen is the decadent treatment of its margin, which is overlaid by the same crests moulded as though flexible around the rim of the guard.

B. D.

RENAISSANCE SCULPTURES

THE Museum has added two important works to the collection of Renaissance sculptures: a terracotta group by Benedetto da Majano, representing the Pietà, and a marble relief, formerly in the Aynard Collection, by Agostino di Duccio. Both artists, it is needless to say, belong among the greatest masters of the Quattrocento. Their character is shown with remarkable force in these two works.

Benedetto da Majano is, with Mino da Fiesole, the last of the Florentine sculptors of the fifteenth century, and in his style he seems to have tried to combine the achievements of the great artists of this century. He shows the realism of Donatello in his portrait busts; he has much of the charm and refinement of Antonio Rossellino in some of his Madonnas and his children, as in the bust of Saint John owned by the Metropolitan Museum; he is not far away from the sincerity and religious feeling of Luca della Robbia or Matteo Civitate. Like all facile, eclectic art, his is not of the same force as that of a master

who makes a fresh start in a new direction. He has not quite the depth of feeling of Donatello or Luca della Robbia, nor the exquisiteness of the best works of Rossellino, but his nature is so harmonious and well balanced that he always produces works of great beauty and refined and graceful expression, even if he does not reach the height of great genius. In his well-balanced, simple style he becomes, however, the precursor of the Cinquecento.

The motive of our terracotta group reminds one at once of one of the first great sculptures by Michelangelo, the Pietà in St. Peter's, a composition which was executed about 1498, a few years after this one of Benedetto de Majano. The terracotta group is a late work by Benedetto, who died in 1497, and shows the highest development of his art, if one can speak of "development" in such a short career. Benedetto's Pietà is, however, not the only one produced during the few years preceding Michelangelo's. Similar compositions were favored by painters as well as by sculptors at the end of the Quattrocento. It has rightly been pointed out by Dr. Bode that it was very possibly Savonarola who influenced the artists of Florence during these years to select motives of this kind. Giovanni della Robbia modeled in clay several times the four-figure composition of the Pietà, the group in Berlin being especially similar to ours. Another Florentine master who comes very near to Benedetto da Majano composed a deeply expressive group of smaller compass, now in Mr. Johnson's collection in Philadelphia. Regarding paintings, we need only remind one of the beautifully balanced composition by Perugino in the Munich Pinacothek. Among all these, however, the one owned by the Museum is probably the earliest, as is shown by the difference in the size of the figures: the Virgin is almost life-size, the other three figures are considerably smaller. The artists would hardly have gone back to this somewhat unbalanced proportion, after they had adopted the same size for all figures.

The figures of the Virgin and the Magdalen are full of dignity and expression



PIETÀ,
BY BENEDETTO DA MAJANO

without being exaggerated in their attitude of devotion. A milder expression, finer proportion, and more careful modeling than in the figure of Christ can hardly be found in any similar representation of the Quattrocento. Only when it comes to expressing sorrow in a man's face, in that of Saint John, the delicate art of Benedetto could not quite attain the desired intensity and force. The whole group is a noble and impressive example of Florentine church art, which combines so exceptionally monumental style, realistic and sincere expression, and exquisite charm.

Agostino di Duccio, although almost contemporary with Benedetto da Majano, stands outside the general development of Florentine art. He is not understood quite so easily as the sculptors with more realistic tendencies, and is a favorite of only a very recent period. He belongs to the small group of artists who appeal to a subtle taste, who do not care for a close following of nature, but follow individual principles of decoration in a conventional style. Rhythm of lines has more value to him than correctness of design. When he wants to carry out a new idea of composition, he does not care for tradition. When his hand starts on a beautiful line he cannot stop, even if the body has to be twisted, but follows it through until the whole pattern has a harmonious swing. People who prefer a more realistic art may call him eccentric and mannered; his friends will compare him to Botticelli and other masters of true line.

The relief acquired by the Museum was the piece which aroused the interest in Duccio when it was exhibited in Paris in 1877. A composition so original and difficult to explain, and a design so flowing and beautiful puzzled the critics. Darcel attributed it to Mino da Fiesole, Gonse to Matteo Civitale, Courajod gave it to a pupil of Donatello, which attribution was correct, as Duccio developed his style from Donatello in spite of Vasari, who brings him into relation with Luca della Robbia. Bode was the only one who called it Duccio, a name until then almost unknown. Since this time it has been accepted by some of the best connoisseurs of Renaissance sculp-

ture as a characteristic work of this master. It must be mentioned, however, that in 1906 and 1907 it was again the object of a more serious controversy between Émile Bertaux, the distinguished connoisseur of Renaissance art, and Brunelli, who believed it to be a modern forgery and who also attacked the authenticity of two of the finest Madonnas of Duccio in the Louvre (one from Anvilliers, the other in the Rothschild Collection), so as to make his theory more plausible. Bertaux defended it in three articles as a fine and characteristic work by the artist. To these I refer the reader. Miss Andy Poyntner in her book on Duccio does not know the original but seems inclined to follow Bode and Bertaux. She mentions a number of motives, which Brunelli believes suspicious, as characteristic of Duccio in this, as in other works. Her suggestion that it may possibly have been executed by a pupil after a design by Duccio does not hold in examining the original itself, as the details do not in any way differ from those of the best works by Duccio. The beautiful, as yet unpublished Madonna in the possession of Mr. Morgan, now on exhibition in the Museum, gives a good opportunity for comparison.

One of the latest references to our relief is by André Michel, in his monumental *L'Histoire de l'art*, where he says, in speaking of authenticated works by Duccio: "On identifiait en 1877 à l'exposition rétrospective de Lyon un charmant bas-relief, très caractéristique de sa manière mais dont le sujet est difficile à déchiffrer, qui fait aujourd'hui partie de la collection Aynard." It is indeed the difficulty of explaining the motive which was one of the reasons for doubting the authenticity of the relief. Generally imitators do not take the trouble to use much imagination, while here the same quaint inventiveness is at work which evolved the not less complicated stories of the reliefs in the tempio Malatestiano in Rimini. The suggestion of Seymour de Ricci that the return of Jesus to His Mother after His dispute with the Doctors is represented seems the most plausible, as the boy has a nimbus and can hardly be taken for any other than Christ. The

composition with the two central figures enclosed by a wreath and a winged figure at either side reminds us of the front panels of Roman sarcophagi. These classical tendencies, as well as the curious manner of expressing movement by flowing garments, which, according to Bertaux, is an exact adaptation of the theory of Duccio's collaborator, Leone Battista Alberti, suit perfectly the fantastic art of this sculptor who expressed, better than any

decoration and gilding, and another similar one with added sgraffito ornaments; the Certosina chest with intarsia; several cassoni with carvings all over, and partly covered with stucco ornaments, from Siena, from the Marken, Umbria, Bologna, and Venice. One of the most important types has, however, been unrepresented—the one with painted panels. Early specimens of this class are rare; most generally, the panels have been taken out and



MARBLE RELIEF BY AGOSTINO DI DUCCIO

other, the atmosphere created by Sigismondo Malatesta around the name of Isotta at the court at Rimini.

W. R. V.

A FLORENTINE CASSONE

A VARIETY of types of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century cassoni of the Italian Renaissance has been represented in the ten specimens hitherto in the Museum collections: the early Florentine chest, with straight walls, without color, and with no decoration except fine classical mouldings; the Venetian type, with stucco

sold separately, because, very often, they were painted by some of the greatest masters, such as Botticelli, Pesellino, Piero di Cosimo, Andrea del Sarto, and others. Fortunately this gap has been filled by a recent acquisition — a cassone dating from about 1475, the panel of which is by one of the minor Florentine masters, but which in proportion, design, and color represents the finest type of this kind of furniture.

Of all Italian chests, the Florentine are the most beautiful, and in the development of Florentine chests the type represented by this chest, without the exuberant, crowded, baroque forms of the sixteenth